BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0029 JANUARY 24, 1976
DAVID LENT/MADRID

SPANISH-U.S. MILITARY COOPERATION

///AUTOMATIC RELEASE WHEN AGREEMENT SIGNED - WATCH VOA WIRE///

ANNCR: INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN UNDERWAY IN MADRID TO RENEW BILATERAT SPANISH- U.S. MILITARY COOPERATION AGREEMENTS AND TODAY THEY REACHED THEIR CLIMAX. SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER ARRIVED IN THE SPANISH CAPITAL TODAY (SATURDAY) AND SIGNED A NEW AGREEMENT. FROM MADRID, VOA'S DAVID LENT EXAMINES THE U.S. SPANISH MILITARY RELATIONSHIP AND WHY IT EXISTS.

VOICE: FUNDAMENTALLY, THE RELATIONSHIP HAS CONSISTED OF AN EXCHANGE OF BASES FOR AID -- SPANISH BASES FOR U.S. FORCES IN EXCHANGE FOR MILITARY AID TO SPANISH FORCES. THAT, FUNDAMENTALLY, IS WHAT THE NEW AGREEMENT PROVIDES.

THE REASON THE UNITED STATES HAS ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED, FOR TWENTY TWO YEARS, A CLOSE, COOPERATIVE MILITARY ARRANGEMENT WITH SPAIN IS SIMPLE. SPAIN'S GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AT THE HEAD OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AND BEHIND NATO COUNTRIES FACING WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES MAKES SPAIN OF STRATEGIC MILITARY IMPORTANCE. AN EXAMPLE: IF THE UNITED STATES HAD TO SUPPLY ITS SIXTH FLEET IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WITHOUT VITAL ROTA NAVAL BASE ON SPAIN'S ATLANTIC COAST, IT WOULD HAVE TO NEARLY DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF SHIPS BRINGING SUPPLIES FROM THE UNITED STATES.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: ALL U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT STATIONED IN EUROPE DO THEIR GROUND-SUPPORT TRAINING AT A RANGE AT THE AIR FORCE BASE AT ZARAGOZA. IT SERVES THE FUNCTION ONCE PERFORMED BY WHEELUS AIR FORCE BASE IN LIBYA.

ANOTHER FACTOR ILLUSTRATING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AMERICA'S MILITARY POSTURE IS THE AIRCRAFT REFUELING CAPACITY PROVIDED BY U.S. BASES IN SPAIN. IN THE EVENT OF TROUBLE IN THE MID-EAST, THE SPANISH BASES BECOME VERY IMPORTANT. SPAIN IS VERY RELUCTANT TO COMMIT ITSELF TO SUPPORT U.S. - MID-EAST VENTURES FROM BASES IN SPAIN AND, IN FACT, DURING THE NINETEEN-SEVENTY-THREE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, THE UNITED STATES MILITARY IN SPAIN DID NOT PLAN OR ORGANIZE A MAJOR SUPPORT EFFORT FOR PLANES BOUND TO THE MID-EAST. BUT THE CAPACITY TO ASSIST PLANES WITH MECHANICAL OR OTHER FACILITIES IS NOT INSIGNIFICANT.

SPAIN PLAYS A DIRECT ROLE IN AMERICAN FULFILLMENT OF COMMITMENTS TO THE NATO ALLIANCE. IT IS NO SECRET THAT AMERICAN MILITARY PLANNERS FEEL THE PRESENT SUPPLY LINE FOR U.S. FORCES IN GERMANY EXTENDING THROUGH BRITAIN AND THE LOW COUNTRIES IS VULNERABLE IN CASE OF WARSAW PACT ATTACKS. U.S. MILITARY LEADERS WOULD LIKE TO SEE SPAIN A FORMAL PART OF THE NATO STRUCTURE BECAUSE SPAIN IS AN IDEAL BASE FROM WHICH TO KEEP OTHER U.S. FORCES SUPPLIED AND TRAINED.

FROM SPAIN'S POINT OF VIEW, THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES IS MAINLY A GUARANTEE AGAINST THE PERCEIVED SOVIET MILITARY THREAT AND A WAY TO UPGRADE SPANISH ARMED FORCES. SPANISH LEADERS SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF A DIRECT SOVIET INVASION OR AN INDIRECT THREAT THROUGH LIBYA, ALGERIA OR, EVEN CLOSER TO HOME, THROUGH PORTUGAL.

AGAINST ALL OF THESE PERCEIVED THREATS, SPAIN HAS SOUGHT AMERICAN DEFENSE GUARANTEES. ALSO, UP UNTIL NOW, THE UNITED STANES HAS SERVED AS SPAIN'S LINK WITH THE NATO ALLIES. WESTERN EUROPE HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO TALK WITH SPAIN ABOUT A JOINT

RELATIONSHIP PENDING AN END TO WHAT THE EUROPEANS SEE AS THE UNDEMOCRATIC ASPECT OF THE SYSTEM ASSOCIATED WITH NEARLY FORTY YEARS OF FRANCO RULE.

BOTH AMERICAN AND SPANISH NEGOTIATORS WENT INTO THE CURRENT TALKS WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF SHIFTING THE EMPHASIS OF THE U.S.-SPANISH RELATIONSHIP FROM ONE LARGELY MILITARY TO ONE MUCH BROADER INCLUDING CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMS. AREAS OF COOPERATION ARE EXPECTED TO INCLUDE JOINT PROJECTS IN SOLAR ENERGY AND CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY. IT'S THOUGHT HERE IN MADRID THAT THESE NON-MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE SPANISH- U.S. RELATIONSHIP MAY, IN THE LONG RUN, BE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THE NOW SIGNED AGREEMENT.

///WATCH RELEASE TIME.///

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